

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 17th July, 2025.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: R. Hendicott (Chair and Independent Member); G. Watkins (Vice-Chair and Independent Member); Councillors R.M. Birch and C.P. Franks; G. Olphert (Independent Member); and Councillor P. Summers (Town and Community Council Representative).

Also present: Councillors L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Labour Group Leader), G.D.D. Carroll (Conservative Group Leader), Dr. I.J. Johnson (Plaid Cymru Group Leader) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health, Llantwit First Independents Group Leader).

193 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

194 [APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE](#) –

These were received from Councillor J.E. Charles and R. Alexander (Independent Member).

195 [MINUTES](#) –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 15th May, 2025 be approved as a correct record.

196 [DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST](#) –

No declarations of interest were received.

197 [OBSERVATIONS BY INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL AND TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETINGS \(MO / HLDS\)](#) –

As part of the Committee’s forward work programme, and in line with its statutory responsibilities, the Monitoring Officer advised that Independent Members of the Standards Committee undertake observations of Vale of Glamorgan Council (“Council”) and Town and Community Council (“TCC”) meetings. This initiative supported the Committee’s aim of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by observing how meetings were conducted in practice and offering constructive, impartial feedback.

Following a recommendation agreed by the Standards Committee at its meeting on 30th January, 2025, the report presented:

- A pro forma for use during observation visits (Appendix 1);
- A draft schedule of Council and TCC meetings to be attended by Independent Members (Appendix 2).

In response to a query from Mr. Olphert, the Chair reiterated the previous agreement of the Committee that advance notice would be given to the relevant Council of the Independent Member Observation taking place.

The Committee went on to discuss their suggested updates to the Appendix documents attached to the report, and subsequently

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the Observation Pro-forma, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved subject to the following amendments:

- a) Additional Question added at top of pro-forma: Which meeting method was used? i.e. Hybrid, Remote or In-Person?
- b) Additional Question added at top of pro-forma: How did you [as Independent Member] attend?
- c) Amendment to Question 1 to read: Were you welcomed by the Clerk either in-person or remotely?
- d) Additional Question added between original questions 17 and 18: Was the meeting well run?
- e) Any other minor amendments deemed appropriate to reflect both in-person and virtual meetings taking place.

(2) T H A T the allocation of Town and Community Council meetings to individual Independent Members, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be agreed.

(3) T H A T the allocation of the Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings to Independent Members, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be agreed.

(4) T H A T Independent Members confirm to the Principal Democratic Services Officer their intended dates for attendance at meetings listed in Appendix 2 to the

report, as early as possible.

(5) T H A T a copy of this report and the relevant Committee minutes be circulated to all Town and Community Council Clerks for information and awareness.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) To ensure the observation criteria remained relevant, consistent, and fit for purpose for use by the Independent Members during observation visits.
- (2) To commence formal observations of Town and Community Councils for the 2025/26 Municipal year.
- (3) To enable structured observations of Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings during the same period.
- (4) To ensure that the schedule of observations remained up to date and Town and Community Councils may be informed in advance.
- (5) To share good practice, support local governance and ensure transparency with Town and Community Councils.

198 [STANDARDS COMMITTEE: PROCEDURES WORKING GROUP – TERMS OF REFERENCE \(MO / HLDS\)](#) –

At its meeting on 27th March, 2025, the Standards Committee agreed to establish a small Working Group to review various Standards-related procedures, including:

- The Protocol on the Standards of Conduct expected of Members under Section 19 of the Council's Constitution and the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure (LDRP), following a Motion approved by Full Council on 2nd December, 2024;
- The model protocol and checklist developed by the Monitoring Officers Group (MOG), informed by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), and reviewed by the Committee under Part II of the agenda;
- The Procedure for Dealing with Allegations Made Against Councillors, last reviewed in January 2016.

At the Committee meeting on 15th May, 2025, it was agreed that the report be deferred to a future meeting to allow clarification on the consultation process for the review. A draft Terms of Reference (ToR), attached at Appendix 1 to the report, was now presented for consideration and approval.

The Monitoring Officer reiterated the Committee's previous agreement in relation to retaining points (a) and (b) under Section 2 of the Terms of Reference document and suggested that the contextual matter of the Vale of Glamorgan Full Council Motion of 2nd December, 2024 be discussed further amongst the Committee and themselves, taking in to consideration the interesting and helpful debate that had just been held with Group Leaders earlier in the same meeting.

Members of the Working Group indicated that they were content to proceed with the first meeting of the Group and therefore, the Committee subsequently

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the draft Terms of Reference (“ToR”) for the revised Standards Procedures Working Group be approved as presented, subject to further consideration of the ToR document at the first meeting of the Working Group, with the first Working Group meeting to be scheduled no earlier than September 2025.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) To inform the Committee of the background and context of the review.
- (2) So that the first meeting of the Working Group may be arranged to formulate the scope and process for the Working Group’s review and agree on a reporting timeline and timescale within which to present a further report for consideration by the Standards Committee.

199 [ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES – RECENT TRIBUNAL DECISIONS \(MO / HLDS\)](#) –

The Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) was an independent body that adjudicated on alleged breaches of the Members’ Code of Conduct, following referral by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

As part of the Standards Committee’s role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct and supporting Members to observe the Code, the report provided an opportunity to review and reflect on recent APW decisions.

Copies of the following decision notices were appended to the report and summarised at Section 2.3 of the covering report:

- Appendix 1 – former Councillor Freya Bletsoe (Bridgend Town Council February 2025).
- Appendix 2 – Councillor Steven Bletsoe (Bridgend Town Council January 2025).
- Appendix 3 – Councillor Gareth Baines (Wrexham County Borough Council Chirk Town Council January 2025).
- Appendix 4 – Councillor Ian Perry (St Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council June 2025).

The Monitoring Officer advised that Committee was invited to consider whether there were any relevant themes arising from the decisions that should be shared with Elected and Co-opted Members or incorporated into training,

particularly in relation to:

- Interpretation and application of the Code of Conduct,
- Types of evidence and conduct considered by the Panel,
- The need for detailed reasons, and
- The sanctions applied (if any) and their rationale.

Councillor Birch then highlighted the benefit of the Committee being sighted on APW decisions going forward, especially if any cases were specific to the Vale of Glamorgan and suggested a six-monthly reporting cycle. Other members of the Committee indicated their favour of the six-monthly frequency but noted that the decisions were not binding on the Committee and questioned whether the decisions were required to be included within a formal Standards Committee agenda or could be shared with Members by some other means.

The Chair noted the Committee's consensus for biannual updates, and the Committee subsequently

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the recent Adjudication Panel for Wales decisions appended to the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Committee receives a formal update on Adjudication Panel for Wales decisions on a biannual basis.

Reason for decisions

(1&2) To ensure the Committee is aware of and reflects on relevant tribunal decisions in the context of its duty to promote high standards of conduct on a six-monthly basis.

[200 PUBLIC SERVICE OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES – RECENT SUMMARY AND INVESTIGATIONS FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES \(MO / HLDS\)](#) –

The Leader advised that certain items were published in error which should have been Part II items which directly affected the Leader relating to unfounded complaints about her and felt it was important to make this point publicly.

Committee was requested to consider the summary of investigation outcomes concerning alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct as published by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) on the 'our findings' section of the PSOW website.

The Monitoring Officer advised that cases were broken down into the following categories:

- a. Integrity,
- b. Promotion of Equality and Respect,

- c. Disclosure or Registration of Interests,
- d. Duty to Uphold the Law, and
- e. Selflessness and Stewardship.

The Committee was invited to consider whether there were any relevant themes arising from the decision that should be shared with Elected and Co-opted Members or incorporated into training.

With no comments or questions raised, the Committee

RESOLVED – T H A T the content of the summary of investigation outcomes by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales concerning alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report on relevant findings by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales in the context of its duty to promote high standards of conduct.

201 [MONITORING OFFICER UPDATE REPORT \(MO / HLDS\)](#) –

The report provided an update in respect of matters addressed at the last Monitoring Officer Group Meeting, held in person at Llandrindod Wells, on 6th June, 2025.

The Monitoring Officer apprised the Committee on the matters discussed at the meeting, as follows, and detailed in Section 2 of the covering report:

With no comments or questions raised, the Committee

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the verbal update provided by the Monitoring Officer at the meeting be noted.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) To apprise Committee.
- (2) Having regard to the information provided.

202 [GROUP LEADER DUTY COMPLIANCE \(MO / HLDS\)](#) –

Having regard to the duty under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Standards Committee had a duty

to establish whether it was content that Political Group Leaders had complied with the duties of the 2021 Act.

As such, Political Group Leaders were requested to meet with the Standards Committee on an annual basis, at the start of each Municipal year, and to complete a Group Leader Proforma for consideration by the Standards Committee.

All four Political Group Leaders had been invited to the meeting to make comment on the duties placed upon them in line with Section 52 of the Local Government 2000 Act as amended by section 62 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the actions they had taken to comply with the aforementioned duties.

All four Political Group Leaders were present at the meeting and were invited to make comments under both Part I and Part II of the agenda alongside their completed pro-forma, which were contained within the Part II agenda papers.

Once each of the Group Leaders had addressed the Committee, and Standards Committee Members had posed any Part I related questions, the Chair subsequently moved the meeting into Part II.

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T both the Group Leader Code of Conduct Compliance Pro-forma (Appendix A) and Vale of Glamorgan Political Group Leader Threshold Criteria (Appendix B) be considered fit for purpose.
- (2) T H A T the verbal representations made by Group Leaders present at the meeting be noted.
- (3) T H A T the Group Leader Code of Conduct Compliance Pro-formas, provided by Group Leaders in advance of the meeting, be considered under the Part II report later on the agenda.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) To meet the Standards Committee duty to establish whether it was content that Political Group Leaders had complied with the duties of the 2021 Act.
- (3) To meet the duties placed upon Political Group Leaders in line with Section 52 of the Local Government 2000 Act as amended by section 62 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

203 DRAFT STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT (MO / HLDS) –

Under Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Standards Committee, as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year, must make an Annual Report to the Authority in respect of that year.

Attached at Appendix 1 to the report was the draft Standards Committee Annual Report for consideration and / or approval and the Chair noted the requirement to amend the draft, following assessment of the statutory duties placed on Group Leaders as considered earlier on the same agenda.

Councillor Summers highlighted a typographical error within the annual report draft, at Page 11, that the Monitoring Officer confirmed would be corrected.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the draft Annual Report, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved and forwarded to Full Council subject to the following amendments:

- a) The Committee’s assessment of the statutory duties placed on Group Leaders, and
- b) Appendix 1 – Page 11 - (ix) Complaints / PSOW Investigation reports – Paragraph 5 – “suspended for **two** months.”

(2) T H A T delegated authority be granted to the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Chair of the Standards Committee to include any additional comments made at the meeting in order to finalise the Annual Report before submission to Full Council.

(3) T H A T a copy of the finalised report, following presentation to Full Council, be forwarded to each Vale of Glamorgan Town and Community Council Clerk and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) In compliance with the requirements of Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

(2) In order to insert additional comments into the Annual Report as discussed at the meeting.

(3) For information.

204 [CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES \(MO / HLDS\)](#) –

The report provided Members with a summary of complaints made against Members and submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales at the end of Quarter 4 2024/25 and Quarter 1 2025/26.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the report before the Committee was a standard item on the Committee’s forward work programme and set out the communications

that they had received from the PSOW. A Part II version of the report had also been provided to the Committee and therefore, the Monitoring Officer would provide an update to the Standards Committee at the meeting under Part II of the agenda in relation to recent correspondence and matters arising.

RESOLVED – T H A T the summary of complaints made against Members and submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (the ‘Ombudsman’) for the period 1st January – 30th June, 2025, as set out within the report, be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report on the summary of complaints made against Members and submitted to the Ombudsman.

205 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC –

RESOLVED – T H A T under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 4 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Act, the relevant paragraphs of the Schedule being referred to in brackets after the minute heading.

206 GROUP LEADER DUTY COMPLIANCE (MO / HLDS) (EXEMPT INFORMATION – PARAGRAPHS 12, 13 AND 14) –

All four Political Group Leaders were invited and were present at the meeting to make comment on the duties placed upon them in line with Section 52 of the Local Government 2000 Act as amended by section 62 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The mechanism being that Political Group Leaders provide reports to the Standards Committee, on an annual basis, using a pre-agreed code of conduct compliance pro-forma, about the actions they had taken to comply with the aforementioned duties.

All four Political Group Leaders had submitted completed pro-forma in advance of the meeting and were provided with the opportunity to address the Committee in turn.

Once each of the Group Leaders had addressed the Committee, and Standards Committee Members posed their related questions, all Political Group Leaders were asked to vacate the meeting so that the Standards Committee could deliberate in private based on the threshold criteria on the role of a Political Group Leader in the Vale of Glamorgan Council, as set out in Appendix B of the Part I report.

Having regard to Standards Committee discussion in private deliberation, it was Subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the Scrutiny Committee Annual Report be amended to reflect the Committee’s satisfaction, following assessment, that the statutory duties placed on Group Leaders have been met.

Reason for decision

Having regard to discussions held at the meeting with political Group Leaders on the completion of the Group Leader code of conduct compliance pro-formas and the Vale of Glamorgan Political Group Leader Threshold Criteria.

207 ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES – RECENT TRIBUNAL DECISIONS (MO / HLDS) (EXEMPT INFORMATION – PARAGRAPHS 12, 13 AND 14) –

The Monitoring Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was to allow to allow Members of the Standards Committee the opportunity to consider recent decisions of the Adjudication Panel for Wales and determine whether any themes or messages should be communicated to Members or included in future training.

The findings offered a useful opportunity for the Standards Committee to reflect on how complaints were considered, reasoned, and recorded, particularly when dealing with complex or contentious matters.

RESOLVED – T H A T the recent Adjudication Panel for Wales decision relating to Councillor Ian Perry and St Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council appended to the report be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and how the Tribunal decision provides helpful insight into the standards expected in both Member conduct and decision-making by Local Authorities. It was acknowledged that reflecting on the Panel’s reasoning would support continuous improvement and transparency in future standards proceedings.

208 NATIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORUM UPDATE (MO / HLDS) (EXEMPT INFORMATION – PARAGRAPHS 12, 13 AND 14) –

The report informed Members of the agenda for the meeting of the National Standards Committee Chairs Forum held remotely on 23rd June, 2025.

The National Standards Committee Chairs Forum served as a platform for sharing good practice and co-ordinating activity among Standards Committees across Wales. It was not a decision-making body and held no formal powers to act on behalf of individual Committees. The minutes of meetings of the Forum were not published.

The Chair of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Standards Committee provided the Committee with a verbal update, following their attendance at the Forum meeting.

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the agenda for the meeting of the National Standards Committee Chairs Forum meeting be noted.

(2) T H A T the verbal update from the Chair following their attendance at the Forum be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussion held at the meeting in relation to the previous National Standards Committee Chairs Forum meeting.

209 CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES (MO / HLDS) (EXEMPT INFORMATION – PARAGRAPHS 12, 13 AND 14) –

As outlined at Part I of the agenda, it had been agreed by the Standards Committee that a standing item appear on the Committee's agenda in order that the Monitoring Officer would be able to apprise Standards Committee Members of correspondence received from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (the Ombudsman) on any matters arising, the items being confidential in nature in line with the Ombudsman's procedure.

The Monitoring Officer therefore provided the Committee with a verbal update in respect of recent confidential correspondence with the Ombudsman.

RESOLVED – T H A T the update on the correspondence with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ('the Ombudsman') and matters arising under the Part II report on the agenda be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions held at the meeting.